

## Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS GH

SUBJ: GOVT-PRESS RELATIONS: LEGON OBSERVER SHUT DOWN

1. SUMMARY: GHANA'S PRESTIGIOUS, INDEPENDENT FORTHNIGHTLY, THE LEGON OBSERVER, ANNOUNCED JULY 25 THAT "DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND ITS CONTROL" IT WOULD CEASE PUBLICATION UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ITS 28 JUNE ISSUE, THE LEGON OBSERVER CARRIED AN EDITORIAL AND A POLITICAL ARTICLE COMMENTING ON THE NATIONAL REDEMPTION COUNCIL'S WITHDRAWAL OF SUBSIDIES ON A NUMBER OF CONSUMER GOODS. ARTICLE, THOUGH ACCURATE ENOUGH, MORE OR LESS EQUATED CHAIRMAN ACHEAMPONG'S ECONOMIC POLICY WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER BUSIA'S, CONCLUDING THAT TWO YEARS OF NRC RULE IN GHANA HAVE ONLY BROUGHT THE COUNTRY TO THE REALIZATION THAT BITTER ECONOMIC TRUTHS THE COUP SOUGHT TO EVADE ARE INEXORABLY COMING HOME TO ROOST.

3. SHORTLY AFTER THIS ARTICLE APPEARED, WE UNDERSTAND THE OBSERVER EDITOR, THE THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA (LEGON), WERE CALLED ON THE CARPET BY NEW COMMISSIONER FOR INFORMATION, COL. TACHIE-MENSON.

4. IN 12 JULY ISSUE, OBSERVER CAMEOUT WITH ANOTHER EDITORIAL

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AND LEAD ARTICLE RE-STATING THE PAPER'S CLAIM TO JOURNALISTIC

INDEPENDENCE AND CALLING ON NRC NOT TO BE SO SENSITIVE TO HONEST CRITICISM. ALSO INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE WAS AN ARTICLE TITLED "INSTITUTIONALIZED SYCOPHANCY - GAINS AND COSTS", COMMENTING ON THE PREVALENCE OF OBSEQUIOUSNESS IN GHANAIAIN SOCIETY, INCLUDING THE PRESS. THIS ARTICLE MAY NOT HAVE ADIDED THE OBSERVER'S CAUSE, CONSIDERING THE ABSENCE OF SUPPORT THE OBSERVER COULD EXPECT FROM OTHER JOURNALISTS IN GHANA WHO ARE PRINCIPALLY "YES-MEN" ON GOVERNMENT-OWNED PAPERS.

5. ON JULY 19, ALMOST AN ENTIRE ISSUE OF THE REVIVED PEOPLE'S EVENING NEWS, AN ORGAN REFLECTING NKRUMAHIST VIEWS, WAS DEVOTED TO AN ATTACK ON THE LEGON OBSERVER AS AN "IMPERIALIST FLUNKY". EVENING NEWS CALLED ON THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO ACT AGAINST "THIS INTELLECTURAL IRRESPONSIBILITY". MOST OF THIS MATERIAL WAS REPRINTED IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED GHANAIAIN TIMES ON JULY 23, UNDER TITLE "THE GROSS DISHONESTY OF THE LEGON OBSERVER".

6. NEXT PUBLIC STEP WAS OBSERVER'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUSPENSION OF PUBLICATION ON JULY 25, DUE TO "CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL". THIS WAS FOLLOWED, ON JULY 27, BY AN ARTICLE IN THE GHANAIAIN TIMES REPORTING THAT THE EDITOR OF THAT PAPER, WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF THE GHANA JOURANISTS ASSOCIATION, HAD IN THE LATTER CAPACITY MADE AN INVESTIGATION OF JOURNAL'S SUSPENSION AND WAS STAISFIED THAT NO OFFICIAL ENCORACHMENT ON FREEDOM OF PRESS HAD TAKEN PLACE AND THAT THE MATTER WAS ENTIRELY A "DOMESTIC ISSUE" FOR THE PUBLISHERS OF LEGON OBSERVER TO RESOLVE.

7. STORY BEING GIVEN OUT BY THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH LEGON OBSERVER IS THAT THEIR PRINTER REFUSED TO CONTINUE PRINTING BECAUSE HE HAS GOVERNMENT PRINTING CONTRACTS AND WAS AFRAID HE WOULF LOSE THEM. THE PRINTER MAINTAINED THIS WAS HIS OWN DECISION AND THAT NO ONE FROM THE GOVERNMENT HAD PUT ANY PRESSURE ON HIM. OBSERVER HAS BEEN UNABLE TO ARRANGE FOR SUBSTITUTE PRINTER.

8. COMMENT: HOWEVER IT WAS DONE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE NRC HAS FINALLY HAD ENOUGH CRITICISM FROM GHANA'S INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES AND HAS SIMPLY PUT A STOP TO PRE-EMINENT CHANNEL THROUGH WICH IT WAS EXPRESSED. THIS DOESN'T SAY MUCH FOR THE MILITARY REGIME'S POLITICAL MATURITY, BUT THEN NO ONE WAS MAKING EXAGGERATED CLAIMS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN THAT REGARD ANYWAY. IN ANY EVENT,THE CURRENT MAINSPRING OF THE LEGON OBSERVER, PROFESSOR PAUL A.V. ANSAH, IS LEAVING GHANA THIS WEEK TO STUDY JOURNALISM FOR AYEAR AT THEUNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN UNDER UNIVERSITY OF GHANA SPONSORSHIP. WE DO NOT, THEREFORE, EXPECT MUCH OF A STRUGGLE TO REVIVE THE OBSERVER WHICH WOULD IN ANY CASE HAVE LOST MUCH OF ITS SPARKLE IN ANSAH'S ABSENCE.  
HANSON

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